

That hearing is today, Madam Speaker, nearly 7 months after the H-2B exemption expired. I can only hope that this Congress will give our small businesses a legal solution to their workforce needs.

□ 1030

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

#### TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF FARM PROGRAMS

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5813) to amend Public Law 110-196 to provide for a temporary extension of programs authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2008 beyond April 18, 2008.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5813

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. ADDITIONAL TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS AND SUSPENSION OF PERMANENT PRICE SUPPORT AUTHORITIES.

Effective as of April 18, 2008, section 1 of Public Law 110-196 (122 Stat. 653) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking “the Secretary of Agriculture shall carry out the authorities, until April 18, 2008” and inserting “the authorities shall be carried out, until April 25, 2008”; and

(2) in subsection (d), by striking “April 18, 2008” and inserting “April 25, 2008”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 5813, a bill to temporarily extend the current farm programs until April 25, 2008.

Madam Speaker, since the House conferees were appointed last week, the conference committee has been meeting to try to work out the remaining unresolved issues between the House and Senate version of the farm bill. I'm pleased to report that on the core farm bill issues we have reached agreement, and there are only a few Member-level issues that must be resolved.

I want to take this moment right now to thank Chairman RANGEL, who

has devoted a great deal of his time and his staff's time to helping us to come to resolution with the Senate about how to fund the additional \$10 billion of new spending for farm bill priorities. Without his leadership and that of Speaker PELOSI and the leaders on the Republican side, we would not be so close to finalizing this bill.

The farm bill maintains and strengthens the safety net that helps farmers and ranchers stay productive and competitive. It also includes important new investments including \$9.5 billion for nutrition programs that are even more important today as food prices continue to climb. It contains \$4 billion for conservation programs that will help protect our land, even as crop reduction soars; \$1.2 billion for renewable energy programs that will help us address the rising cost of gasoline and help us get independent of foreign oil; and \$1.3 billion for new initiatives and programs to support fruit and vegetable producers, including new programs to help socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers.

All these important investments will be lost if we don't have time to finish this conference. This short extension will allow us to finish our work and bring back to the House a conference report that meets the needs of all of American agriculture and the consumers.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to report that I've been in conversations with Chairman RANGEL and others that have been involved in the effort to identify the offsets, and can report that they have made significant progress, that we have been able to, apparently, convince the Senate to jettison the extraneous items, and so now we're talking about \$10 billion instead of \$12.5 billion, which is a major accomplishment and victory, and we are getting very close to being able to resolve the differences in the offsets because, where we've been at is the House has put out one set of offsets and the Senate has put out another, and we're trying to reconcile that.

I also, last night, had discussions with the Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. GOODLATTE and others, asking that the Secretary and the White House be brought into this negotiation to help us finish up. And from what I can tell, there appears to be an effort to get that engaged. So I think we're very close to having this offset issue resolved, hopefully, in a way that will have the bipartisan support in this body, as well as in the other body, and also hopefully have the support, at the end of the day, of the White House.

And that is what Mr. GOODLATTE and I have been struggling to accomplish since last July. We've made a lot of progress. We're not there yet, but we feel we've made huge progress in the last few days, enough to warrant another 1-week extension of the farm bill so that we can finish up our work.

I want to commend Congressman GOODLATTE for his outstanding leader-

ship in this effort, his outstanding leadership when he was chairman of the committee last session, and getting this farm bill process started. And I can tell you that, without a doubt, that we would not be at this point without him being willing to work with us and help us make some tough decisions to get to where we are. So I just appreciate very much he and his staff and the leadership that they've shown because, over in the House, what we're trying to do here is not only have a bill that we can be proud of, but also have a bill we can pass. And I think we're heading in that direction.

Madam Speaker, I urge passage of the bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the temporary farm bill extension that will extend some provisions of the 2002 farm bill just a little while longer so that we may complete the work on this farm bill. I believe we've made good progress on coming to agreement on the funding which has been the biggest obstacle preventing any real movement on the completion of a farm bill to this point. While we're not there yet, I do believe we are getting close.

The House and Senate conferees have been meeting every day this week, and we intend to continue our work throughout the rest of the week. We are committed to putting together a reform-minded bill that we can bring before this body soon and earn the support of our Members here and in the other chamber, and then go on to the President for his approval.

We all recognize the need for a new farm bill. This process has already been delayed enough, and while it is a long time coming, we shouldn't halt the momentum that is finally getting this process moving to a positive direction.

I urge my colleagues to support this farm bill extension to give us a little more time to work out the rest of the funding issues and wrap up the policy differences so that we can produce a good farm bill.

I want to thank the chairman of the committee, Mr. PETERSON, for his kind words, and say that there is no doubt that no one, in this body or the other, I'll take the chance of saying that, has worked harder or longer in order to try to get to this point than Chairman PETERSON has. He has spoken to innumerable people in order to try to bring about the kind of consensus it takes to get here. He has been down many different avenues, and if one doesn't work, he comes back, starts over again and tries a different approach. And his persistence and his attention to the details in this farm bill and his knowledge of the wide range of issues that comprise the farm bill has enabled us to negotiate effectively with the Senate to negotiate effectively with Members in this body who have legitimate concerns that need to be addressed in the farm bill.